

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 04575 01 OF 02 092015Z

63

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9658

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 4575

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECIN, EWWT, EFIN, PFOR, BR, AR, BL, UY, PA

SUBJECT: PLATE RIVER BASIN MEETING AT COCHABAMBA

1. SUMMARY. THE GOB IS PLEASED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE LOW-KEYED PLATE RIVER BASIN CONFERENCE AT COCHABAMBA LAST WEEK. THE UNCONTROVERSIAL DECISION TO LOCATE THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE FINANCIAL FUND IN BOLIVIA WAS VIEWED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENT. BRAZIL AGREED TO HOST NEXT YEAR'S SESSION IN BRASILIA. BRAZILIAN PRESS COVERAGE CENTERED ON TWO DISPUTED ISSUES NOT ON THE AGENDA: A) THE FOILED BUT STILL SOMEWHAT MYSTERIOUS ARGENTINE BID TO FORM A BIG-THREE DECISION-MAKING BLOC WITH BRAZIL AND URUGUAY IN CONTRAVENTION OF THE CURRENT RULE THAT PLATE BASIN DECISIONS ARE UNANIMOUS, AND B) THE BRAZILIAN/ARGENTINE EXCHANGE UNYIELDING VIEWS ON PRIOR CONSULTATION (MEANING VETO RIGHTS) WITH THIRD COUNTRIES FOR PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY TWO COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE SHARED NATURAL

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PAGE 02 BRASIL 04575 01 OF 02 092015Z

RESOURCES. BRAZIL REITERATED THAT IT STANDS JURIDICALLY ON THE

DECLARATION OF ASUNCION WHICH DOES NOT, BRAZIL MAINTAINS, REQUIRE PRIOR CONSULTATIONS ON THE ITAIPU DAM PROJECT. FONMIN OFFICIALS REPORT THAT ARGENTINA HAS NOT RAISED THE ISSUE BILATERALLY, WHICH IS THE APPROPRIATE FORUM IN BRAZIL'S VIEW. A POST-COCHABAMBA STATEMENT BY THE ARGENTINE DELEGATE MIGHT REFLECT A MODERATION OF ARGENTINA'S POSITION, ACCORDING TO FONMIN OFFICIALS. BRAZIL STILL SEES THE PLATE RIVER BASIN AS AN INSTRUMENT OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, AND, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES, AS A MEANS TO OFFSET ARGENTINA'S INFLUENCE. WHILE STILL SMARTING FROM ITS LOSS OF FACE IN THE ORFILA ELECTION, BRAZIL HAS MOVED ON THREE FRONTS IN THE SPACE OF ONE MONTH TO BOOST ITSELF VIS-A-VIS ARGENTINA: SIGNING THE ANTARCTIC TREATY, FOILING ARGENTINA'S ALLEGED BLOC-MOVE AT COCHABAMBA, AND BASKING IN THE NEWS OF THE BRAZIL/FRG NUCLEAR ACCORD. END SUMMARY.

2. FONMIN'S DIVISION DIRECTOR FOR THE AMERICAS (SECTION 1), MINISTER JOAO HERMES PEREIRA DE ARAUJO, TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE GOB IS "PLEASED" WITH THE "VERY CONSTRUCTIVE" OUTCOME OF LAST WEEK'S SEVENTH ANNUAL PLATE RIVER BASIN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE AT COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA. HE SAID THAT DELEGATES WERE VERY FLEXIBLE AND THE ATMOSPHERE AGREEABLE, ALTHOUGH THE ARGENTINE DELEGATION MAINTAINED A "CORRECT" ATTITUDE. ARAUJO REMARKED THAT BRAZIL VIEWED THE DECISION TO LOCATE THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE FINANCIAL FUND IN BOLIVIA (RESOLUTION 56) AS THE MAIN ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE FOUR-DAY CONFERENCE, AND AS AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARD EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATE RIVER BASIN TREATY. HE NOTED THAT THE FUND NOW HAS DOLS 20 MILLION, A FIFTH OF ITS AUTHORIZED CAPITAL OF DOLS 100 MILLION. HE ADDED THAT ARGENTINA STILL HAS NOT RATIFIED THE CONVENTION ESTABLISHING THE FUND, WHICH IS TO BE USED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, PRINCIPALLY IN THE SMALLER COUNTRIES OF URUGUAY, PARAGUAY AND BOLIVIA.

3. OTHER UNCONTROVERSIAL ACTIONS ON THE SOMEWHAT TECHNICAL AGENDA ITEMS INCLUDED RESOLUTIONS: TO DIRECT THE FUND TO COMMENCE ACTIVITIES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (57), TO FACILITATE A NAVIGATIONAL STUDY OF THE PARAGUAY RIVER (58), TO FACILITATE VARIOUS SECTORAL STUDIES, PREPARE PROGRAMS, AND PLAN MEETINGS (59 AND 60), AND TO FIX INTERNAL WORKING PRIORITIES (61). (EMB IS POUCHING OFFICIAL REPORT OF CONFERENCE TO ARA/ECP) BRAZIL AGREED AT THE CONFERENCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BRASIL 04575 01 OF 02 092015Z

TO HOST NEXT YEAR'S SESSION IN BRASILIA.

4. WIDE PRESS COVERAGE WAS GIVEN TO SILVEIRA'S ROLE IN FOILING AN ALLEGED ARGENTINE BID TO FORM A BIG-THREE DECISION-MAKING BLOC, IN WHICH ARGENTINA, BRAZIL AND URUGUAY WOULD MAKE DECISIONS TO THE EXCLUSION OF BOLIVIA AND PARAGUAY. THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN A SHARP BREAK FROM THE CURRENT RULE OF UNANIMOUS DECISIONS IN THE PLATE RIVER BASIN. THE SPONSOR OF THE PLAN,

ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, WAS BOATTI OSORIO, ONE OF ARGENTINA'S DEPUTY DELEGATES. SILVEIRA REACTED QUICKLY AND PUBLICLY TO THE ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT THE UNANIMITY RULE, WHICH, THE PRESS NOTED, HAS SERVED TO PROTECT BRAZIL AGAINST ARGENTINA'S MANEUVERS TO HINDER HYDROELECTRIC IMPROVEMENTS ON THE PARANA RIVER. THE PRESS NOTED THAT SILVEIRA TOLD BENITEZ AFTER THE EPISODE THAT THROUGH HIS LONG EXPERIENCE AS AMBASSADOR IN BUENOS AIRES, HE HAD LEARNED THE SPOTS OF THE ARGENTINES, WHO TRY "TO SNARE US BY THE ARMS, THE LEGS, OR ANY OTHER PART THAT THEY CAN."

5. BRAZILIAN PRESS COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTED THE SILVEIRA/BENITEZ EXCHANGES ON PRIOR CONSULTATION (I.E., INCLUDING VETO RIGHTS BY AN AFFECTED THIRD COUNTRY) FOR IMPROVEMENTS OF SHARED NATURAL RESOURCES, THE SPECIFIC CASE BEING THE HUGE BRAZILIAN/ PARAGUAYAN ITAIPU DAM ON THE PARANA, AN INTERNATIONAL RIVER. THE PRESS REPORTED THAT AT COCHABAMBA'S INAUGURAL SESSION, BENITEZ ASKED THE PLATE RIVER BASIN TO DEFINE THE RULES WHICH REGULATE DIFFERENT USES OF INTERNATIONAL RIVERS, AND BESEECHED MEMBER COUNTRIES "TO MAKE RECIPROCAL CONCESSIONS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE OPTIMAL IMPROVEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE REGION." THIS COMMENT APPARENTLY SPURRED SILVEIRA TO COUNTER LATER IN THE DAY THAT:

"BRAZIL RECOGNIZES THAT PRIOR CONSULTATION IS A BASIC INSTRUMENT OF DIPLOMACY AROUND THE WORLD, BUT IT WOULD BE ABSURD TO INTERRUPT, UNDER AN ALLEGATION OF SUPPOSED HARM, A PROCESS SUCH AS WHAT WE ARE INITIATING TO DIRECT OUR OWN NATURAL RESOURCES. IT IS FALSE AND USELESS TO INTELLECTUALIZE THE DISCUSSION OF INITIATIVES WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO RESPOND CRITICALLY TO URGENT HUMAN NEEDS." SILVEIRA DREW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN PRIOR CONSULTATION AND ORDINARY CONSULTATION (WITHOUT VETO RIGHTS), WHICH "IS A BASIC INSTRUMENT OF DIPLOMACY."

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PAGE 04 BRASIL 04575 01 OF 02 092015Z

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 04575 02 OF 02 092013Z

63

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 4575

6. THIS EXCHANGE WAS REPORTED IN THE BRAZILIAN PRESS AS SETTING THE STAGE FOR A CONFRONTATION WHICH NEVER CAME. THE PRESS NOTED THAT BENITEZ TRIED SEVERAL OTHER TIMES DURING THE MEETING TO RAISE THE SUBJECT BUT THESE ATTEMPTS WERE DEFLECTED BY SILVEIRA WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE OTHER MINISTERS INTERESTED IN DECIDING ISSUES RELATED TO GETTING THE FUND INTO OPERATION. AFTER RETURNING TO BRAZIL, SILVEIRA COMMENTED THAT HE DID NOT FEEL A SPIRIT OF CONFRONTATION AT COCHABAMBA. (A MEMBER OF SILVEIRA'S STAFF IN CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBOFF ATTRIBUTED THE RELATIVELY AMICABLE TONE OF THE COCHABAMBA MEETING TO THE FACT THAT ARGENTINA WAS REPRESENTED BY BENETIZ RATHER THAN VIGNES.) ACCORDING TO THE BRAZILIAN MAGAZINE VEJA, BOATTI OSORIO WAS LESS CONCILIATORY: IF NO AGREEMENT IS REACHED ON THE PARANA RIVER PROJECTS, "ARGENTINA WILL HAVE TO TRY TO EQUILIBRATE ITS POSITION IN RELATION TO THE CONTINENT THROUGH NUCLEAR SUPPORT."

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PAGE 02 BRASIL 04575 02 OF 02 092013Z

7. ARAUJO EMPHASIZED TO EMBOFF THAT BRAZIL STANDS JURIDICALLY ON THE DECLARATION OF ASUNCION, WHICH REQUIRES AGREEMENT BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES WHO WANT TO IMPROVE A SHARED NATURAL RESOURCE BUT DOES NOT NECESSITATE PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES UNLESS THE PROJECT CAUSES THEM EXCESSIVE HARM. HE DOES NOT VIEW ITAIPU AS MEETING THIS EXCEPTIONAL CRITERION, ESPECIALLY SINCE, HE CLAIMED, ANY HARM TO ARGENTINA WOULD COME FROM THE PARAGUAYAN/ARGENTINE YACIRETA DAM TO BE BUILT DOWNSTREAM FROM ITAIPU. ACCORDING TO ARAUJO,

ARGENTINA HAS NO INTERNATIONAL LAW ON WHICH TO BASE ITS CASE, AND THAT IS WHY ARGENTINA IS TRYING TO INTERJECT THE POLITICAL PROCESS OF PRIOR CONSULTATIONS. NONETHELESS, HE ADDED, INTERNATIONAL LAW (THE DECLARATION) TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER, AND RENDERS IRRELEVANT, SUCH POLITICAL PROCESSES.

8. ACCORDING TO ARAUJO, DESPITE THE FUROR IN THE ARGENTINE PRESS, ARGENTINA HAS NOT RAISED BILATERALLY THE ISSUE OF PREVIOUS CONSULTATIONS AND HE KNOWS OF ANO ARGENTINE INTENTION TO DO SO. HE ADDED THAT HE BLAMED "INTERNATIONAL DIFFICULTIES" IN ARGENTINA AND THE ARGENTINE PRESS FOR GIVING RISE TO PUBLIC "FEAR" ON THIS ISSUE, AND HE DID NOT THINK THAT THE GOA HAD ABETTED THE PRESS CAMPAIGN.

9. MINISTER ARAUJO NOTED THAT HE THOUGHT "VERY CONSTRUCTIVE" A REPORTED STATEMENT OF BENITEZ ON MAY 31 THAT "THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL, BUT ONLY DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW ABOUT CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RIVERS." THESE "POINTS OF VIEW" REFER, BENITEZ WAS REPORTED AS SAYING, TO DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL LAW. ARAUJO SAID THAT HE INTERPRETS THIS AS A MODERATION OF ARGENTINA FONMIN VIGNES' EARLIER POSITION.

10. IN A LEAD EDITORIAL, THE INFLUENTIAL O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO HAILED THE MEETING WITH THE COMMENT THAT "FINALLY IT IS POSSIBLE TO BEGIN TO SEE A USEFUL AND DURABLE UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE COUNTRIES OF THE SO-CALLED 'SOUTHERN CONE' OF THE CONTINENT, LOOKING TOWARD THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR PEOPLES." THE EDITORIAL PRAISED THE "MATURITY" OF THE ARGENTINE DELEGATION FOR NOT PRESSING THE ISSUE OF PRIOR CONSULTATIONS, AND THE "CONILIATORY" STANCE OF SILVEIRA AS WELL AS HIS "FELICITY" IN DEFENDING BRAZIL'S VIEWS. THE PIECE

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PAGE 03 BRASIL 04575 02 OF 02 092013Z

WENT ON TO WELCOME A RECENT EDITORIAL IN THE ARGENTINE PAPER CLARIN WHICH CALLED ON THE GOA TO ABANDON ITS OLD POSITION ON PRIOR CONSULTATIONS IN FAVOR OF FACILITATING BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL DISCUSSINS ON OTHER MATTERS OF COMMON INTERST.

11. COMMENT - BRAZIL CONTINUES TO SEE THE PLATE RIVER BASIN MAINLY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ENHANCING BRAZIL'S ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND PRESTIGE, ESPECIALLY WITH THE SMALLER MEMBERS AS AN OFFSET TO ARGENTINA'S INFLUENCE. BRAZIL'S THREE MAIN GOALS ARE:

-- INTEGRATION - BRAZIL WANTS ESPECIALLY TO IMPROVE PHYSICAL INTEGRATION, I.E., TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATIONS, AND FRONTIER DEVELOPMENT, WITH THE END GOAL OF SPURRING INTRA-REGIMNAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT. AMONG ITS SPECIFIC GOALS IN THIS AREA, BRAZIL WANTS TO COOPERATE WITH ARGENTINA ON IMPROVEMENTS TO THEIR SHARED STRETCH OF THE URUGUAYAN

RIVER. AS THE DOMINANT AND MOST RAPIDLY EXPANDING ECONOMIC POWER IN THE AREA, BRAZIL STANDS TO GAIN MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE FROM IMPROVED PHYSICAL INTEGRATION AND FROM GOOD RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS CONCERNED ABOUT THE EXPANSION OF BRAZILIAN INVESTMENTS AND OF TRADE DEPENDENCE ON BRAZIL.

-- DEVELOPMENT - LESS IMPORTANTLY, BRAZIL VIEWS THE PLATE RIVER BASIN AS AN INSTRUMENT OF ASSISTANCE TO BOLIVIA, PARAGUAY, AND URUGUAY, THE INTENDED PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES OF THE FINANCIAL FUND. AS A PRIME CONTRIBUTOR TO THE FUND, BRAZIL WANTS TO PLAY THE ROLE OF A MORE DEVELOPED BUT SYMPATHETIC NEIGHBOR WHO CAN RETAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE SMALLER AND POORER COUNTRIES AS IT ENTERS THE TRANSITION PROCESS TO DEVELOPED COUNTRY STATUS.

-- OFFSET TO ARGENTINA - BRAZIL SEEKS CLOSER TIES WITH ITS SMALLER NEIGHBORS AS AN OFFSET TO ARGENTINA'S INFLUENCE. GENEROSITY IN THE FINANCIAL FUND AND IN INITIATING JOINT PROJECTS WITH THE SMALLER COUNTRIES WOULD SERVE THIS AIM. AS REPORTED IN THE BRAZILIAN PRESS, SILVEIRA'S ROLE IN DEFLECTING AND EMBARRASSING ARGENTINA IN ITS ALLEGED POWER PLAY AT THE CONFERENCE ALSO ENHANCED BRAZIL'S CREDIBILITY AS A DEFENDER OF THE LITTLE PARTNERS.

12. ALTHOUGH STILL SMARTING FROM ITS LOSS OF FACE IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 BRASIL 04575 02 OF 02 092013Z

ORFILA ELECTION, BRAZIL IN THE SPACE OF A MONTH HAS MOVED ON THREE FRONTS TO BOOST ITSELF VIS-A-VIS ARGENTINA -- 1) PRIOR TO COCHABAMBA, BY SIGNING THE ANTARCTIC TREATY, A MOVE LONG CONSIDERED BUT PREVIOUSLY PUT OFF IN DEFERENCE TO ARGENTINE SENSITIVITIES; 2) BY, AT LEAST ALLEGEDLY, EXPOSING AND FOILING THE POWER PLAY AT COCHABAMBA; AND 3) AFTER COCHABAMBA, BY BASKING IN THE NEWS OF THE HUGE NUCLEAR DEAL WITH WEST GERMANY WHILE REITERATING BRAZIL'S PEACEFUL INTENTIONS. IF ARGENTINA IS IN FACT RELAXING ITS POSITION ON PRIOR CONSULTATIONS, THIS WOULD GIVE BRAZIL A FOURTH BOOST.

13. REGARDING THE ALLEGED ARGENTINE PROPOSAL WHICH WOULD IN EFFECT EXCLUDE BOLIVIA AND PARAGUAY FROM MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PLATE BASIN DECISION, PRIVATE COMMENTS FROM TWO BRAZILIAN OFFICIALS WHO WENT TO COCHABAMBA SUGGEST THAT 1) THE WHOLE MATTER WAS GROSSLY OVERBLOWN BY THE BRAZILIAN PRESS, AND THAT 2) THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT WOULD, OF COURSE, NOT HAVE BEEN SO INSENSITIVE AS TO PRESENT TO ALL SO BALDLY HEGEMONISTIC A PROPOSAL. ACCORDING TO THESE SOURCES, AND (UNIDENTIFIED) ARGENTINE REPRESENTATIVE DID, IN AN EARLY, PRIVATE, AND APPARENTLY RESTRICTED MEETING, RAISE THE IDEA, BUT IMMEDIATELY DROPPED BACK IN THE FACE OF THE

OBVIOUS AND TO-BE-EXPECTED DEMURRER FROM THE BRAZILIAN SIDE.
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